

DOJ Announces String of Home Improvement Fraud Indictments

Additional victims encouraged to contact Consumer Protection Unit

The Delaware Department of Justice's Consumer Protection Unit today announced three indictments, including separate criminal charges against two brothers, in a series of home improvement frauds targeting older Delawareans.

Isaac K. Lovell, 44, of Bear was indicted on July 8, 2019 on charges including Racketeering, Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering, Home Improvement Fraud, and Theft Greater than \$100,000. The indictment alleges that Isaac Lovell utilized his home improvement business, Phire-Fly Contracting Co., to defraud senior citizens, including an older woman from whom Lovell received over \$600,000 between 2015 and 2017. A warrant was issued for Isaac Lovell's arrest in July 2019; he was recently arrested in Ohio and extradited to Delaware on August 13, 2019.

David H. Lovell, 48, of Wilmington was indicted on August 19, 2019, on charges including Racketeering and Home Improvement Fraud. The indictment against David Lovell alleges that between 2015 and 2017, he used his home improvement business, DHL & Son Contracting, to defraud multiple elderly individuals. In a pattern similar to his brother's, David Lovell convinced his victims to pay him for home improvement services that he never completed.

Andrew W. Masserelli, 48, of Magnolia was indicted on August 5, 2019, on charges of Home Improvement Fraud and Theft Greater than \$1,500. Between 2016 and 2018, Masserelli and his business, Drew's Tree Service, allegedly defrauded multiple homeowners, including two senior citizens, by failing to

substantially complete tree removal work on their properties after accepting money.

Individuals who believe they have been defrauded by any of these individuals or their businesses are encouraged to contact the Department of Justice at (302) 577-8600. Other reports of home improvement fraud, in general, should be made to local law enforcement.

CPU advises Delawareans hiring a contractor for home improvement work to be alert for scams, and to help avoid them by doing homework before hiring a contractor:

- Contractors should always be bonded and maintain all required licenses for mechanical work.
- Get references and follow up on them, including conducting online searches and searching for companies at the [Delaware Better Business Bureau's website](#).
- Do research and talk to friends and neighbors about a contractor's reputation.
- Always have terms with contractors memorialized in writing.
- Never pay for the work in cash or in full up front, keep detailed payment records, and withhold final payment until you are satisfied with the work.

Because fraud victims are often embarrassed, Delawareans with older loved ones are encouraged to have their loved ones contact them before entering into any home improvement contract, and to visit loved ones' residence regularly when home improvement work is being performed.

For more tips on hiring a contractor, visit the [Federal Trade Commission's website](#).

The Delaware Department of Justice reminds the public that an indictment is merely an allegation and is not evidence of guilt. Defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a jury trial at which the State bears the burden of proving each

charge beyond a reasonable doubt.